United Nations A/53/998

General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 June 1999

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Agenda item 86
Questions relating to information

Letter dated 11 June 1999 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to forward, enclosed herewith, the letter dated 31 May 1999 from Ambassador Branko Brankovic, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva, addressed to Abid Hussain, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, relative to the destruction of the media facilities by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as part of its aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex published as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 86.

(*Signed*) Vladislav **Jovanovic**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

99-17562 (E) 140699

Annex

Letter dated 31 May 1999 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

I am addressing you in regard to the aggression by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which has been going on for 68 days. This undeclared war against an independent and sovereign Federal Republic of Yugoslavia represents the most flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and order, as well as international conventions on human rights and humanitarian law.

Having in mind your mandate, I would like to inform you that NATO is using this specific form of aggression in an effort to silence the media in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The aim of the destruction of a great number of private radio and television stations and more than two dozen TV transmitters and relay stations was to suppress the right to a different opinion and to further expand the war-mongering manipulation of world public opinion. Clearly, the intention of the NATO aggressors is to prevent world public opinion from learning of the extensive scope of their crimes, as well as to impose on the world their totalitarian and single-minded perceptions. The censorship imposed by the NATO generals on the Western media is an illustrative example of this practice.

On 23 April 1999, the NATO aggressors demolished the building of the Radio and Television of Serbia in Belgrade, the largest radio and TV company in the Balkans. During this attack, 16 employees of the Radio and Television of Serbia lost their lives, while 19 sustained severe injuries.

On 3 May 1999, NATO destroyed the building of the Radio and Television of Serbia in Novi Sad, the second largest TV centre in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which broadcast programmes in the languages of all national minorities living in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Every day, a 56-hour programme was broadcast in the Hungarian, Slovak, Ruthenian, Romanian and Romany languages, which is in line with the commitment of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to guarantee equal rights to information to all its citizens.

By the bombing of the business centre "Usce" in Belgrade on 21 and 27 April 1999, the headquarters as well as the production and broadcasting infrastructure of the three private TV stations and four private radio stations were destroyed.

Several dozen TV transmitters and relay stations used by State-run or private TV and radio stations were destroyed during the NATO air strikes. The TV transmitter on Mt. Avala, the biggest transmitter in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which according to its architectural design was unique in the world, was razed to the ground. NATO also destroyed the TV transmitters situated in the business centre "Usce", on Fruska Gora, Gules (Pristina) and others, as well as relay stations in Krijaca, Borca, on Bukulja, Cer, Crni Vrh, Jastrebac, Ovcar, Tornik, etc.

Making good on its threat to "destroy the nerve centres of Serbia", the aggressor warplanes destroyed the satellite station "Jugoslavija" near Ivanjica, which transmitted PTT and TV signals worldwide. Also destroyed were telephone exchanges in Pristina (7 April 1999), Kragujevac and Uzice (7 May 1999), while many others were damaged or made inoperative in other towns of Serbia.

In its latest attempt to prevent world public opinion from seeing the terrible consequences of their vandalism in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, i.e., the killing of innocent people, bombing of hospitals and schools, destruction of the infrastructure and economy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, NATO has exerted pressure on the European Telecommunications Satellite Organization (EUTELSAT) to discontinue the transmission of the Radio-TV Serbia satellite programme and thus make it inaccessible in European countries.

Such acts by NATO, led by the United States of America, which took on itself to be the global leader for freedom of the media, are contrary to the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, articles 19 and 20. These acts are also contrary to the provisions of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War, adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

For all champions of the freedom of speech and for all people committed to the right to freedom of expression, these destructive acts represent the last warning alarm before NATO censorship takes control over all the media of the so-called "free world".

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia expects you, in your capacity as Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, to condemn publicly such acts by NATO and to request EUTELSAT to continue the transmission of the Radio-TV Serbia satellite programme, because such acts by NATO breach the above-mentioned instruments.

I have the honour to transmit to you, enclosed herewith, the statement by the Ministry for Information of the Republic of Serbia in regard to the decision of EUTELSAT to discontinue the transmission of the Radio-TV Serbia satellite programme.

(*Signed*) Branko **Brankovic**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.